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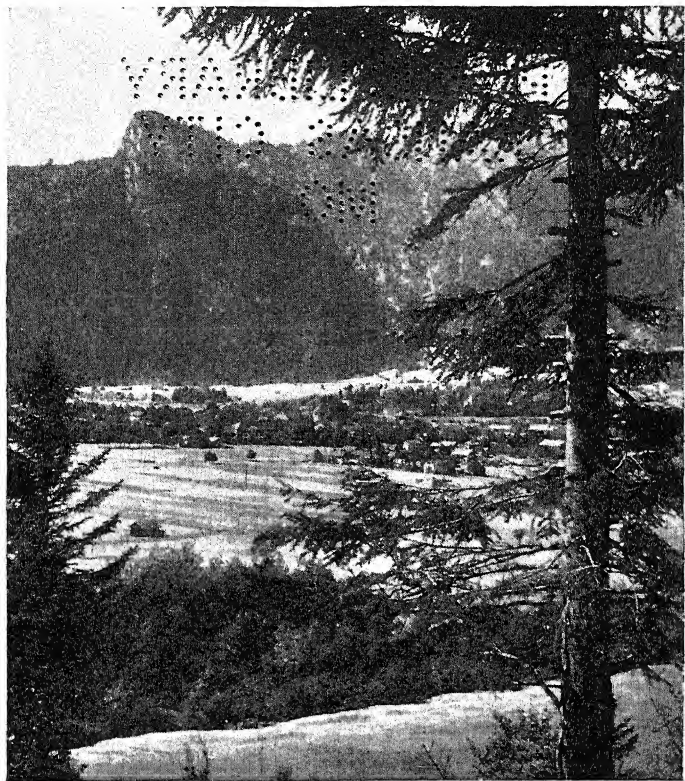
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THE WORLD'S STAGE

WILHELM  
OBERAMMERGAU, 1934



A cluster of toy-like houses, the village of Oberammergau nestles at the foot of the Bavarian Alps in the valley of the Ammer.

THE WORLD'S STAGE  
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OBERAMMERGAU, 1934

A BOOK ABOUT THE PASSION PLAY:  
ITS HISTORY, ITS MEANING  
AND ITS PEOPLE

BY RAYMOND TIFFT FULLER

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NEW YORK MCMXXXIV  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### *The Play's History*

IN 1634 the humble folk of a tiny Bavarian village, in consequence of a solemn vow, produced a "miracle play." Every decade thereafter forever they were to give it—and to this day three hundred years hence they have fulfilled their pledge. In 1934 their descendants will present that play's thirtieth revival. During all the intervening time, only one decade's production omitted, only two briefly postponed—and those lapses due to no fault of theirs!

In the old days that village made that Passion Play famous; in recent times the Play has made the village famous.

No dramatic event in history has had so long and continuous a "run." And that not because its presentation is not overdone, its revivals being spaced at long intervals and including comparatively few repetitions. Not because the world is given opportunity to attend it only once in ten years, so that but twice in the average adult's playgoing life can he buy a ticket. No, undoubtedly Oberammergau's dramatic inheritance could survive a yearly staging and still repeat its record of sold-out houses. It is a noble stage production.

Only Shakespeare's round dozen of triumphs, Goethe's *Faust*, and a few of the perennial pieces of Schiller, Molière, Aristophanes, Æschylus and Euripides hold comparable vitality in Western literature. For such dramas as these, "all the world's a stage"—and will be for generations to come.

Yet, the true, the enduring Passion Play has but one stage, one setting meet and perfect for it: that of the quiet village

nestling among the rugged Bavarian mountains. It is in this village most particularly that "the play's the thing"—a play to catch the conscience of mankind, Shakespeare might have put it.

In the past dramatic presentations of sacred Christian themes have come and gone; even Passion Plays of other sorts and at other places have flourished their brief hour upon the stage, and then, "like snow upon the Desert's dusty face," have melted from the prosceniums of Time.—There have been, it is said, more than thirty in Bavaria alone during the past century. And *why* has the Play at Oberammergau survived? Perhaps that will become clearer as we go along.

Viewed broadly, no chance nor accident has located the particular and permanent Passion Play in the neighborhood of Munich, nor placed it in Bavaria. Foreigners who know their Germany understand the bond which embraces this fourfold combination: the Bavarian spirit, the mellow city, the villagers along the Ammer, and the Play. Said John L. Stoddard, veteran traveler and lecturer: "In any other place the Passion Play would be offensive." And, although other such plays have arisen and faded, a persistence of one here for three hundred years, in adversity and in affluence, in notoriety and in seclusion,—this is a phenomenon with which the peculiar qualities of the Bavarian have had much to do, but the Oberammergau faithfulness and integrity yet more. We shall come back again later on to these Oberammergau Bavarians. . . .

The village really has the Romans to thank for the fact that its Passion Play became renowned throughout the world. This may sound like a paradox; remembering what Pilate, Governor of Jerusalem, did for Jesus; but it is a statement borne out by history. For it was the Romans who built the first road leading northward through the Alps and through the Ammer Valley from Parthanum (today's Partenkirchen) to Campodunum (now Kempten), and they erected the military sta-

tion Coveliacæ near the Celtic settlement Covelius. The name of this settlement is still preserved in the name of that odd towering peak hanging close over Oberammergau, the Kofel.

Trade routes of the Middle Ages followed the roads built by the Romans. Former Roman military stations on this particular road became storage depots for merchandise on the way from Italy into Suevia (now Swabia, or Württemberg) and to the Rhine and Danube. And the wood carvings of Oberammergau found their way also to the outside world along the same routes by which the wares of Italy and the Orient had reached central and northern Europe. With packs on their backs Oberammergauers peddled their carved figures of the Saviour and the saints throughout Germany, Holland, England, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, Spain. Their woodcarving art became renowned in Europe long before their dramatic art was known. Indeed, it was their carvings of Biblical figures which first directed the attention of the outside world to the Passion Play—if we are to believe German historians.

Oberammergau comes into recorded history about seven centuries ago, as one of several townlets along this roadway. The commercial traffic of that highway made the valley dwellers prosperous. Also, they gathered, of course, something of the religious fervor and artistic skills of medieval Italy, and received not a little infusion of Italian blood as well, from settlers coming over the Alps. Italian given names and surnames are today not uncommon in the town. Rich elements of Celtic life and tradition persisted well into medieval times, for the ancient Boiaria of the region were tribesmen of that strain rather than Teutonic or Germanic. (In these shadowy backgrounds lurk many of the causes which have made Bavarians, especially southern Bavarians, so obviously different from folk elsewhere in Germany: they are a highly composite, widely mixed folk.)

The roots of the Passion Play might be said to have first sprouted from a legendary tale of 1329. Emperor of the Holy

Roman Empire, Duke Ludwig IV of Bavaria (he was first the latter, then the former), returning from Rome at his army's head, came through the Alps and was making his way down the Ammer Valley along the age-old road. He was carrying with him a miraculous figure of the Virgin and Child carved in finest alabaster. This had been given into his charge by an angel, so goes the story, who descended to earth for the errand. As the Emperor journeyed through the mountains, himself carrying the precious burden, it became so heavy that his horse thrice sank to its knees. Regarding this as a sign from Heaven, he vowed he would found a monastery on the spot, and there the image should stay. The next year did see the foundations laid for the now revered old Church of Our Lady Of Ettal. Here this same holy image reposes to this day, and it can be seen and mused over by any visitor.

Ettal is but an hour's walk from Oberammergau. The Jesuit monastery established there by Ludwig's commands became the cultural font of the whole region. The mountain people found the influence of these learned monks to their liking, and the fathers' fostering of art and agricultural knowledge to their material advantage. The town, even previous to this date, having some considerable start as a woodcarving center, added to its skills and its outlying farmlands grew more productive. The monks probably saw to it that material well-being did not interfere with their charges' having lively aspirations for the finer things of culture. Indeed, already a certain leisure was here (such secular leisure, that is, as could then exist in Europe at all!) and local patronage and encouragement for artists—and also here were the great trade routes at their doors for the selling of carvings and ceramics all over awakening Europe. The records attest that Oberammergau dwellers became notable for music, songs and dancing; loved colorful dress and decorated houses; won wide fame as carvers and sculptors—which notableness still persists.

There arose in the village special interest in folk-plays and religious drama, doubtless chiefly as a means of spreading Gospel teachings among the yet rude peasantry roundabout. The development of "mystery" and Passion Plays is probably a typical German development. Most of such originated in Southern Germany as Easter plays. In the fourteenth century, the first Passion Play entirely in German was written. Southern France had a similar development in the fourteenth and Northern France in the fifteenth century. There are traces of Passion Plays in Italy dating to the fourteenth century. It is generally believed that this type of drama developed in Southern Germany, finding its way into France and Italy—and not coming from Italy into Germany.

By 1633 (when first we hear of any *one* Passion Play there) this interest in drama was of long standing, and it shaped the course that inevitably the villagers took when the Great Plague broke upon western Bavaria. They pledged their dramatic skill and their spiritual integrity together—and the vow they made is the Play you will see in 1934, or something very much like it.

—But let the present parish priest, Father Bogenrieder, tell of that vow in his own words:

What is the origin of this vow?

Three centuries ago death cast its deep shadows over the peaceful cottages of a village seemingly lost amid the solitudes of the Bavarian Alps. True, the echo of the Thirty Years' War had penetrated even into the lonely recesses of this mountain valley; but neither Imperial nor Swedish troops could be accounted responsible for the tragedy that enveloped Oberammergau. Such a responsibility lay at the door of a far more formidable foe than those dreaded marauders. The foe was named Plague.

The Plague wrought havoc untold all around. Entire communities perished. That of Oberammergau took wise precautions to avoid the peril, and no stranger wandering through the valley was admitted into the village. Yet despite the vigilance of guards ceaselessly at work by day

and night, the enemy, all the more terrible for being invisible, nonetheless found its way into the sanctuary, concealed in the body, not of a stranger, but of a native of the place, Kaspar Schisler by name. A surname often to be found in the "Memorial Book of the Dead" kept at the village presbytery.

Schisler was employed in the neighboring village of Eschenlohe in the valley of the Loisach, where he had nursed and buried numerous victims of the plague, which finally struck him down himself. Sick unto death, he yearned for a last glimpse of wife and children. Along a concealed mountain pass he crept unobserved into the valley, succeeded in evading the watchful guards, and entered his house unseen. And also unseen entered the plague.

As a result forty-eight persons died victims of the epidemic between the autumn of 1632 and July 1633.

The visitation knew no end. More than half the village had succumbed to the fearful invader, and distress grew daily greater. The village elders, or what remained of them, met in consternation to seek ways and means of successfully combating the redoubtable foe. But distraught as they were, they nevertheless did not despair, for they put their trust in God, who could help in this hour of dire affliction.

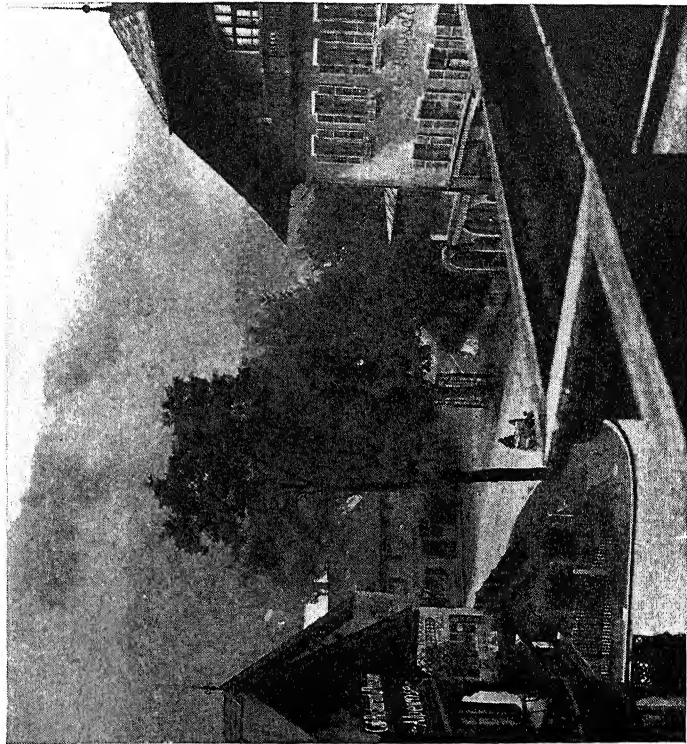
It came about that the elders—the "Council of Six" and "Council of Twelve"—went straight from their sitting to the village church. Here, before the altar, they grasped each other's hands and swore a solemn oath "henceforth to keep the Tragedy of the Passion every ten years." And the records bear witness that from that hour on "no one died of the plague in Oberammergau."

The following year, 1634, witnessed the first performance of the Passion Play in consequence of this vow. Henceforth the Play was produced regularly every tenth year (1644, '54, '64, '74, '80 and thence at the *beginning* of each decade—save in one instance; even in the most difficult times and in the teeth of obstacles which at first sight have often seemed insuperable.

The earliest written text was probably prepared by those monks of Ettal. Quite certain it is, however, that the Ettal text merely reproduced and combined several more ancient versions of the story, whose use as a play can be traced backward into



Many of the beautiful old houses in Oberammergau are older than the Passion Play itself. This is a characteristic glimpse of the village.



the thirteenth century. As before mentioned, only one decade has failed of its scheduled performance, although doubtless never was the text exactly the same from decade to decade.

That lapse was in 1770. And it was after, and probably because of, that omission when the first radical change in text was made. It seems that throughout Bavaria various sorts of more or less honestly religious plays were being given; some from questionable motives, and many of them failing to hold to authentic Biblical narrative or failing to give a sufficiently dignified treatment to the presentations. At any rate, a royal edict at this time forbade all stage productions on Biblical themes. Despite Oberammergau's long and bitter protests, it could not win permission in 1770 to put on its play. Whether or not this play, too, carried interpolations and impromptus somewhat out of sorts with the official religious views of the time, at least by 1780 a revised text was offered the authorities, and by special dispensation of Karl Theodor, then Duke of Bavaria, the Oberammergau piece was made an exception to the ruling and thereafter was permitted; a state of affairs yet persisting. Even now empty and formal permission must be had each decade from the Bavarian State. (It is likely that by the operation of these official bans, at the end of the eighteenth century many holy plays "competing" with Oberammergau's were permanently eliminated.)

The present text was turned out in 1810 by Father Weiss who put it into a form and content which has not since radically altered, although much polished, poeticized and beautified by Priest Daisenberger before the 1850 performances. The notable music, only lately a feature of the play, was the creation of a gifted local schoolmaster named Dedler in 1810. This music, of both chorus and orchestra, was not printed (and has not yet been printed except in small part), and Dedler's manuscript scores being destroyed by fire shortly afterward, it had to be reconstructed by him *in toto* before the next

decade. In spite of a continuous stream of composers since then seeking to improve this music, it has been kept almost as Dedler (lovingly called "the Oberammergau Mozart") finished it 114 years ago.

Mr. Montrose J. Moses, whose important book<sup>1</sup> on the Play carries a translation into English of the text used in 1930, tells us:

The Oberammergau Passion Play—a product of so many hands—is nevertheless usually identified in the mind of every true Ammergauer with three names. There was Father Ottmar Weiss of Ettal who, when the monastic secularization occurred (i.e., Ettal's suppression as a Jesuit retreat, 1803), devoted himself to teaching in Oberau near by, and then did his work on the Passion text; there was Rochus Dedler, schoolmaster and composer, in which latter capacity his tradition dominates Oberammergau today; and finally, there was the beloved Geistlicher Rath Joseph Alois Daisenberger whose priestly duties, varied and energetic, did not prevent him from devoting much time to this and other literary labors.

Mr. Moses elsewhere warns against our thinking of the text or the music or, indeed, the stage "business," as settled, fixed, static. His studies of the Play have shown him that it is, in superficial details, always being altered from decade to decade.

That "Play which made the Town world-famous" dates from about 1850, and from Father Daisenberger. It appears that until the impetus which this indefatigable padre (himself a native son, educated at Ettal) gave to the whole institution, the Play was little known or noted outside Bavaria or Germany. He conceived it a power-for-good; a holy instrument with a doubly moving appeal: as theater and as sermon. He "saw possibilities" which the more modest and humble villagers had overlooked. Due to the more cultured language and to the finish which his lyrical interpolations and poetic rewordings gave,—and, above all, because of the emphasis on

<sup>1</sup> *The Passion Play of Oberammergau.*

theatrical effects in directing,—the Play first attained “the grand manner” it impressively brought to a climax in 1922<sup>2</sup> and 1930.

In a few years, partly as a direct result of the good padre's influence, the Passion Play outgrew its infancy, its neighborhood audiences of a few hundred crowding around a rough scaffolding in the small churchyard. The community gaining for that purpose a larger church, the Play went indoors. Royalty visited it. Berliners, Prussians, Saxons began to come. German newspapers and magazines took notice. British, French and Italian visitors wrote it up and talked of it. As decades went by it graduated to its own small theater, and from this to larger and larger theaters it has expanded almost with each production. In 1900, the village dared a huge auditorium; 1910 and 1922 saw that enlarged. In 1930, the final structure allows 5,200 auditors to be seated, lets another 300 stand, while all watch about 750 actors flow on and off the largest stage in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> The Play was postponed from 1920 because of the chaos and poverty throughout Germany.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *The Play's Setting: Village and Villagers*

HAVING one off-year visit to Oberammergau to his credit, and having seen its Play once—but a hundred times in remembrance!—the writer is yet not satiated; he still longs and hopes to attend the Tercentenary Jubilee of 1934. There is something there to go back to. I delight to share with you, who are anticipating going, some little of what I gleaned in those two visits. At present, however—a few short months ere Oberammergau will be all agog again—the best I can do is to set down some inadequate paragraphs on paper.—Let us go back there for a while—now!

When you travel from Munich to Oberammergau, you go up. Whether you travel by omnibus, post-bus, automobile or train, you go up. For Oberammergau is a mountain village. Secluded. Half-hidden. As if destined by topography to be passed by, overlooked. Ironical that! Fully half the tourists to Europe annually seek it out. In 1930, over 300,000 people attended a certain Play there. One-sixth were Americans.

It is a pleasant village for 2,500 souls to live in. It lies sixty miles south from the great city of Munich, and 1,050 feet nearer the stars. (Much nearer Heaven, too, as you will come to know!) The trip from Munich—and practically everyone goes via Munich, however you make it, is singularly beautiful. Mountains on mountains, lakes on lakes; forests, streams, meadows, wayside shrines, Dörfer, sheep, birds, flowers—"and people in quaint raiment dressed."

Suddenly, winding in and out among valleys twisting through their hills, you come within sight of Oberammergau lying at the foot of a rampart of rocks. "Why," you exclaim, "it's just another village! A red-roofed, white-walled, church-spired, garden-blessed German *Dorf*, like a thousand others I have already seen!—No distinction. Nothing spectacular. Quiet. Well-kept-up." Disappointment casts you down for a few first moments. And then . . . then your memory, your reading come back to reassure you. Historic spot this! The site and residence of something odd, unusual, unique, there! Yonder is a famous town. Wait, wait until we shall have seen it through—and seen its Play tomorrow!

The street which takes you through the outlying houses and on to the square in the village center conducts you past a wide diversity of dwellings, irregularly placed and spaced. Some with fronts squarely on the thoroughfare. Some hiding behind screening flowers. Lanes, cross-streets, laid out on no plan. Houses remarkably painted on gable and wall. Women in the gay garb of long ago; men, boys, children dressed as if the street were a stage.—The charming stream, subdued and confined, gurgling straight through the townlet. Ducks, geese on it. Hens around the houses. Flowers. Flowers everywhere.—Then to our inn, and the business of taking rooms. . . .

A few hours later it is sunset; you have gathered unto yourself something more than first fleeting impressions. You have perchance, known a new meaning to the words "permanence," "faithfulness," "sincerity" which you have been reading about before you came. . . . Another day, and you will have witnessed the Passion Play, and henceforth be able to say truthfully: "I have seen a great play; one of the world's best; the world's longest. Well-acted, supremely staged and costumed And I have been moved by it as I did not expect I could be." . .

Yes, that is what has attracted the world to come here: the

Play *and* the players. Great actors cannot *make* a mediocre play; a great play cannot succeed with mediocre actors.

It is a powerful, soundly dramatic story, this story of a humble man who abode here his destined days, and then belonged to the ages. A story of the flesh becoming Spirit and dwelling amongst us; of a carpenter becoming Deity. It is of universal appeal (even to Asians, many of whom yearly attend!) because it is symbolic of all idealism. It is typical of the struggles and despair of all men who have striven to do good to their fellows; of those who came and knocked—and the world received them not.

That a story about a Carpenter should be portrayed by simple men and women, hard-working "hewers of wood and drawers of water," is peculiarly fitting. Probably humble folk best understand the earthly struggles and viewpoint of such an Artisan. Elemental simplicity comes close to them in their intimate relations with lifelong fellow men; they must face with directness the first-hand realities of life and death.—  
(2) Certain it is, that from among such plain people roundabout Oberammergau extraordinarily good actors do emerge. There seems never to be a dearth of them, well cast and eager!  
6 Whether or not to account for this you speak of "the spiritual influence of the Play" or point to more traceable backgrounds,  
9 the Play's acting traditions have dominated the early lives and  
11 the old age of everyone in the vicinity to an astonishing degree.

To be worthy of a part, to be selected for one of the time-honored speaking-rôles, is a high aspiration, a distinction appreciated above riches—as many an outside effort to commercialize play and players attests. It is not given to many of the earth's humble to aspire so high. What Napoleon's words meant in inspiration and morale to his soldiers, "In every private's haversack reposes a field marshal's baton," finds parallel in the promise held out to the youth of the upper Ammer

Valley—one among you may some day carry the wooden cross to Golgotha! . . .

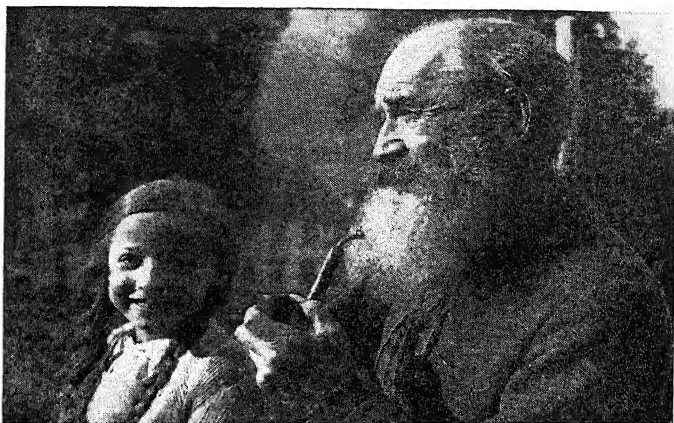
Better perhaps had your first visit here been made in an off-year. Less confusion; less distraction; more direct contacts. It readily becomes clear why, although thirty, forty, fifty other Passion Plays elsewhere failed and ended, this one did not fail. You can more quickly get to appreciate the people themselves, for *they are the reason, the why!*

In an off-year, then, stop in this village for a while. Read your books. Absorb your history. And let these quiet-mannered, quaintly-dressed inhabitants serve as illustrations for the texts. Almost from the beginning your inner ear will detect the two overtones of the place: permanence is one overtone; a general spiritual serenity is the other.

Circulate unhurriedly among its merchants, farmers, craftsmen, housewives, children. Let someone of the village point out to you: "That one was the Peter . . . Yonder works he who will be St. John . . . See, there is the woman who last played Our Lady." You would watch them—these somehow *unusual* villagers!—carving, sewing, swinging the mattock. Grave, thoughtful, contented, richly happy folk are these. The potter, the smith, the cooper, the mother, the father, the councilman, the postmaster, the forester, the reaper: of such is the stuff from which Passion Plays are made. Simple people, unspoiled by flattery, luxury or sophistication. Well-read, broad-backgrounded, unfettered, yet well-poised too. They have *chosen* from amongst the things of the world, holding fast to that which is, to them, good.

There is something awesome in all this. With familiarity, awe grows upon you. There is something of deep spiritual meaning in these lives. If ever, you will think, if ever there dwelt a group over which the mantle of satisfaction has fallen, it is here. Unmistakably, they *respect* themselves, each other. As one respects himself and others who have done, are doing,





The villagers of Oberammergau are a serene and happy people. In the upper picture is one of the town's kindly patriarchs. Below is the sculptor, Joseph Mayr, who will play the Nikodemus of 1934.

or are about to do a task to be proud of: a bit of the world's work or the world's art worshipfully done. Yet little *pride* is visible, and less self-consciousness, and least of all conceit. These people, these *actors*—for they are nearly all that, unprofessional yet highly professional as are few amateurs elsewhere—deem themselves worthy of their hire—which hire is the esteem of their fellow citizens. Little else. Often nothing else. No financial recompense to themselves for the better part of a whole year's task.—That such local esteem broadens into fame at times appears of slight concern to them. They are all in it; it is, of course, the whole community's deepest concern. Upon its commercial success or failure have come to depend in some measure local taxation, local improvements and the general welfare of all for the ensuing nine seasons. These latter considerations are, however, beside the point to them. The main objective has been and is the artistic accomplishment of the Play. . . . As you see them come and go about their daily affairs, you see that they recognize a destiny abiding in their souls. A destiny which has dwelt there from childhood. Above breadwinning they have a call to something greater. . . .

The ancient function of the "miracle play" in medieval Europe was the same as the purpose for which the old Italian and Flemish masters and hosts of minor artists, local priests and mural decorators everywhere painted: to tell the Biblical stories and vividly to teach the Biblical moralities to an unlettered populace. After printing made possible the reading of books by common folk, miracle plays, as such, had served their usefulness and gradually dropped out of existence. In France, Spain, Italy, Britain, Eastern Europe, they all but ceased during the eighteenth century; except perhaps to persist vestigially here and there as local holiday festivities and customs. The original spirit gone out of them, they became only spectacles to be languidly enjoyed by people as familiar

with the Testaments as with their own family histories—and as little moved by them!

Yet, at Oberammergau reasons peculiar to the place kept alive its own particular play. Well, you ask, reasons in *what* way peculiar? . . . In the first place, as we have said, here was *a different sort of villager*. Different? Yes, I dare this statement because many an observer besides myself has proffered it. How baffling to say just why! To place your finger on what makes these folk a type apart. Even a distinguished London critic, who in 1930 quite frankly said he did not care for the theme of the Play nor for the "commercial spirit" evidenced *outside the village*, wrote: "The actors regard the performance as a solemn sacrament." Let us see what some others have noticed.

"Whatever they do seems to be simple, direct, honest, coming from within, and still untouched by imitation, greed or trickery." (Ida Tarbell.)

"It demands no lengthy observation of these people to convince one that religiously they are unusually developed. . . . Although most devout, the Oberammergauer is singularly free from bigotry and most tolerant of those holding other beliefs." (Janet H. Swift in *The Passion Play of Oberammergau*.)

Different? Religiously steadfast?—Yet into the Great Holocaust of 1914 they, too, sons and fathers, went. Flouting Jesus for the Fatherland!—In this all-too-human passion, at any rate, these villagers, under both impetus and compulsion of mass emotion, did not differ from millions of their brethren throughout the world! And, in common also with millions of their brethren, they have repented and sorrowed over that passion since . . . "Sixty-seven of its men never came back, and many who did return came home crippled and wounded."

*Different*. Though exactly how and why may elude the stranger at first. I have mentioned Italian blood and Italian influence; Celtic backgrounds; Jesuit guidance from early times.

But these do not seem adequate to account for it. Maybe it is rather due to village traditions—which is to say *Play traditions*.—Unique here, ever-present, a vivid connecting link, this perennial Play. These traditions foster an *esprit*, a morale, of old beginnings. Waxing stronger with the years; more keenly appreciated, more fully appraised as the past recedes into the distance.

“The purity of intention regarding the offering of the Passion Play has not in the least altered in these village folk. There is still the ideal held before Oberammergau. One is born there with the consciousness of this ideal; one is raised there with a sense that life passes between intervals of ordinary living and concentrated preparation and performance. The very air they breathe is full of the reverent spirit.”<sup>1</sup>

Aside from their being the sort of people they seem to be, there is, furthermore, the Vow. That, too, has served to keep a 1634 Passion Play alive today. To these rapt villagers the Play has continued to be an act of adoration, a church service, a mark of faithfulness to that vow, a token of gratitude for a divine deliverance. In spite of their being Catholics in the long past and today, it should be noted that (no doubt mainly due to Priest Daisenberger’s influence again) of late years Roman Catholic doctrine has largely dropped out of the presentation, and a wider, more universal philosophy becomes emphasized.

There is also the *artistic* element in the thing which challenged them, excited them, and continues to. It has developed to be a contribution to art-for-art’s-sake; a compunction which explains the artistic sureness and thoroughness with which it is always carried out.

Today this Play has survived the rest (may it not be?) because they of the Ammer Valley held that art, faith and the covenant *were of one piece*. Today not fifty, as three hun-

<sup>1</sup> Moses: *The Passion Play of Oberammergau*.

dred years ago; but *seven hundred fifty* performers take part, all of whom call the Valley home. By their common, unaided efforts, thanks to a sense and understanding of Art indefatigably developed through successive generations, these hardy sons and daughters of the countryside succeed in depicting the Carpenter's Passion and Sacrifice with such a single-minded elevation of purpose, such touching sincerity, that an onlooker can scarcely fail to be deeply moved by it. It is in the unique *combination* of these elements: people, tradition, artistic challenge, that we have the explanation of the Play's longevity and successful world-wide appeal. Truly, the village with its adjuncts is the very epitome of human permanence, in so far as anything human here on earth offers permanence.

There is little change in the Bavarian Alps since Roman legionaries tramped and camped there on their way to the Danube and the Rhine; since the 'stuffs of Asia, coming via Venice, crossed the ranges to Augsburg, Antwerp and the Hanseatic cities. A German journalist recently wrote, after an airplane tour of his country, that his outstanding impression was astonishment as to how little twenty centuries of man, his deeds and his dwellings, had modified or marked the landscape below. "So it might have appeared to Cæsar could he have looked as I did!" Lakes, forests, mountains, rivers; and not towns, cities and railways featured the aerial map, he said.

Also, there is comparatively little change in the hamlet on the banks of the Ammer since the day when it emerged into recorded history and held a thousand citizens. There has not been substantial alteration in the Play or its spirit since it was early performed as a ritual of thank-offering for deliverance. The stage has widened and been modernized so that a world audience can share. But essentially the same the thing has gone marching on down the years—so that as we step from airplane and motor, we accept it for what it was first

intended to be.—Stop to think!—it is a professional amateurity *utterly different*! Not alone for its age, but for the absolutely unique character of its performers! No actors elsewhere are like these!—Someone has written of this:

It is an *amazing* phenomenon, whereby a potter can hold the center of a stage illuminated by every newspaper and journal in the Western World; and Peter, a woodcarver, divide his talents between the bars of heaven and the Gasthaus Alte Post, to play at cards with cronies until the cock crows thrice! . . .

But change of a sort, of course, there is. Human life and death; human growing up and growing old; have their effects. Change has always lain in the inevitable *procession* of the Play's actors. From generation to generation, in every decade of its covenant with Fate, the cast is different. Sadly enough, actors' lives are far shorter than the rôles they play! Twice, three times, perhaps, may a man play *Christus*: Joseph Mayr did it three times, then Anton Lang three times. Blessed, indeed, among women is she who may impersonate Mary in two different years: Anni Rutz will do so in 1934. Successive casts are never the same. Yet each holds real connection with the past. Handed down each decade are part of the cast and all of the acting traditions and stage-directing of those who have made noted names. . . .

Visitors simply cannot tarry at Oberammergau without having these several influences—tradition, people, hamlet—react upon them in varying proportions. It is difficult to imagine a foreigner so hard-boiled and insensitive as not to feel all three.

The village is itself no mean attraction. It might well be delighting tourists on its own account, were it not for its Play; in fact, it very much does so in off-years.

Whether there is a touch of affectation or not in wearing

old-fashioned picturesque Bavarian costume, certainly enough of it is done to create a captivating "atmosphere." Many of the women wear long full skirts, red or blue or black, and clean aprons, bright kerchiefs crossed over the breast, a fetching bodice-effect of upper garment, decorated not unlikely with coins, bangles or a crucifix. The men in short jackets heavy with sewed-on braid, wear for trousers homespun or leather breeches which leave the knees bare and the legs also to the upper calf. The heavy wool "stockings" are in reality only calf-bands, having no upper part and no lower. Hob-nailed shoes are slipped on over what look to be sockless feet. It is all very fetching.—Even without the headgears: women with colored scarfs or a strange pancaked, feathered hat; men with round green felt hats almost invariably sporting the synthetic "Gemsepinsel" tuft at its back. (This Gemsepinsel amounts to a tribal-mark among Bavarians; it is a vestigial reminder of the chamois buck's breast-tuft, once the trophy of the chase to mountaineer ancestors.)

Near the very middle of the village stands the Parish Church, "a jewel of rococo" with rich silver stucco ornamentation inside. The idyllic cemetery, which extends clear around the church, contains the graves of many noted forefathers and some interesting monuments. In all streets haphazard one runs upon well-known names. Guido Mayr, the Judas of 1922 and 1930, lives along the gurgling Mühlbach (millstream). Anni Rutz, who was Mary in 1930 and again will play the part in the Jubilee year, lives near the Town Hall. Anton Lang, thrice Christus, inhabits a house called "Daheim" which also shelters a small showroom of his pottery. Half-hidden by tall trees, near the villa of Alois Lang (to play Christus in 1934), stands the Woodcarving School, next to Theater and Church the pride of Oberammergau.

The old Museum is located in an intriguing house, and somewhat farther on is the home of Johann Georg Lang,

director of the Play. Herein is the famous Oberammergau "Rippe," a Nativity group which is visited by people from the whole Valley at Christmas time. It consists of more than two hundred figures, fills a whole room, and the costumes of its figures are copies of those worn in Passion Plays of former centuries. Each carven figure's face is a *portrait* of a native actor. It is well worth seeing, as a century-long stream of awed admirers attests.

I cannot forget how at my first visit I was moved by the village's peculiar character; by something of Italy in it, something of Switzerland in it, and by a *quality* at which I can only hint in calling it "universal." A quality, mind you, not an appearance. It is a composite town, and an ideal place for civilized human beings to live in, I said to myself, after a few hours spent mainly in wandering about the unplanned streets and alleys with their diversified, scrupulously kept-up homes. Here is a town built the way all towns should be!—Not, of course, laid out in a real-estate-development manner so dear to the modern American heart; but a spot wherein fine people have dwelt for generations and generations; building anew when demands arose; building as best they could with the resources at hand; not mortgaging the future lavishly, speculatively. Looking toward old-age comfort amid the constant breadwinning; living by-the-way, too, frugally, intelligently, humanely.

There are no "lower classes" here; there is simple democracy. There are no run-down quarters in it; every home has the hallmark of permanence, whether antiquity or present-day needs laid the sticks and stones. It is a balanced social unit and, practically speaking, a self-contained unit. It has tradesmen, gardeners, craftsmen, lawyers, farmers, tailors, seamstresses, housewives, enough—yet it has its quota of working artists, too. It has stood there long enough to be thoroughly "shaken down"—to acquire an equilibrium of all kinds of



folk who go to make up a village—little or no surplusage of talents or trades; few failures, few misfits.

These dwellings were built to last and to be the heritage of the family-tree far down into the future. Many of the timbered, tile-roofed structures, I learned with amazement, were older than the Passion Play! The cozy inn, "Gasthaus Alte Post" boasted proudly on a little plaque on its corner to the effect that it has been continuously in operation as an inn since 1622. With examples like this before them, could more recent builders have doubts as to the longevity of sound homes—and sound families!—stoutly put together?—Contrast our New World vicissitudes! That a dwelling over here, costing twenty times over what these Bavarian chalets did, should look presentable for one generation is an outstanding expectation of our modern days. American families usually do not hang together that long—not to mention the structures which house them.

That *universal* quality which struck me at my first visit again came to me in 1930—unconsciously, for I had not been thinking of it. It is a quality heightened by the quaint paintings embellishing many of the fronts and gables of the town. Here was all Christendom's story. In gorgeous colorings, here was the Ascension, there the story of Eden. Far-off Jerusalem in Asia brought to Roman Catholic Bavaria; an ancient folk-tale of Semitic tribes dwelling in desert Arabia perpetuated by the Teutons whose forefathers had worn skins and flourished copper spears when Nebuchadnezzar was a king on a throne of gold. Franz Zwick, eighteenth century painter, is the great name behind Oberammergau's peerless fronts. He did a score of them masterfully. Only a few that he himself did remain (in restored form) today, a fire of a hundred years ago destroying most of them. But in the surviving few the pigments are still unusually vivid. . . . Interspersed with the Biblical, less sacred and much more secular painting also bespoke then

(perhaps they are gone now!) the fact that the concerns of the flesh had still perennial appeal to these tolerant villagers. Close bigotry and the mental acidosis of "puritanism" were of old, as now, obviously absent from the Oberammergau stirring around me, even as an unquestioning piety and a richness of inward faith were also. A few of the house fronts I saw bore episodes from the fairy-tales which have spread from Germany to the whole Western world; a curious and charming taste which brings a smile to visitors from anywhere. The "Hansel und Gretel House" carries a mural series from that age-old tale, it being the most striking of the lot.

Windows glistening, knockers polished, streets and doorsteps immaculate: lanes not crooked but not straight; gardens the like of which the German soul adores, kept like cupboards in their neatness: all advertise a rigorous housekeeping and love of order. Yes, I agreed with Karl Baedeker's guide-book, this is Germany, but Germany with the saving humanism of Bavarian love of beauty and leisure.

On that May morning in 1930 my companion and I sat sipping peerless beer in a taproom older than the Charter of Massachusetts. From neighboring fields came the shouts and sounds of planting labors. Pastures farther off sent in the musical tinkles and tintinnabulations of cattle bells. Goat herds trotted past in the street outside. Tapping mallets were busy in many a garret and studio within earshot. . . . We had been gazing at the mist-haloed summit of pointed Kofel—of which sudden apparitions are to be caught from every street corner in the place—thinking of it as the original landmark which located the early tribal hamlet, and of it as the symbol and sign of the peaceful modern village that still finds shelter at its base. Nature, we saw, was the dominant note at Oberammergau; not machinery, factories, power plants; not the hard steel spirit of modern industrialized Germany. Despite the up-to-dateness of a water supply which had brought plumbing

and its comforts to the town; despite electric light and power coming from nearby mountain cascades; despite motor-post and omnibus; we were here in this nook *in* Germany but not *of* it.

"How true my professor's remark," he was saying, "that 'the life of today's America differs more from Washington's America than his day differed from a German town of the fifteenth century.'—Well, here are we two in what is essentially a German town of the Middle Ages, and see how it has been able to make the transition to today, not losing completely the spirit of yesterday. A feat, alas, not to be achieved at home! This Bavarian town is in most aspects closely typical of all agriculturally-surrounded villages, French, British, Italian; and not too unlike, in essential economy, an American community. This place exhibits, as a model would exhibit, the ideal, the essence of *all* village life. It is what villages ought everywhere to be.—Why," he added, "there hasn't ever been a jail in it!"

That visit and these remarks were made just twenty years ago. . . . In spite of the 1930 motor-cars and charabancs which not seldom buzzed through the thoroughfares, Oberammergau three years ago was the Oberammergau of 1913. A great war had come and gone, a jolt profound enough to shatter the hitherto unbroken records of the Play, so that 1920's production was delayed two years. But in 1930 I could hardly feel aware I had been away more than a winter or two; so slightly does a universal village, an ideal, model village, yield to changes merely in transport and warmaking. . . .

Due, I suppose, to the difficulty many living Americans have in conceiving of a human being or a human institution these days disdaining the attractions of wealth and publicity, tidal waves of opinions and rumors have been floated during the seasons of the last two Plays—and not alone here in the United States!—concerning the sad commercializing, not to say vulgarization, of the Passion Play. It has been easy to re-

mark, "Oh, yes, I guess the Play's a sort of racket; it *must be commercialized by this time.*"—Not easy to substantiate such a "hunch." Not easy, either, to estimate the harm such baseless tales do to prospective travelers. These tales are slanders.

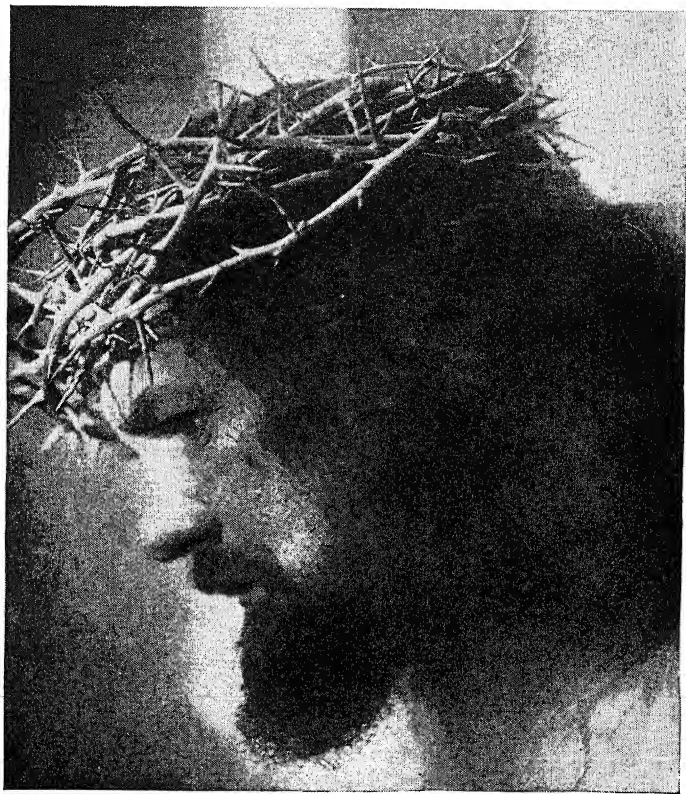
Now, I would not wish to hold that the folk of Oberammergau are flesh and blood saints dwelling in a round tower of medieval ivory. Nor people averse to seeing a "good year" come rather than a "bad year." Nor would they hesitate to price their wares, their services and their tickets at about the figure that the foreign and domestic visitor would be willing to pay. But emphatically I would not agree that they themselves had brought greed into the thing or viewed the Play year through an eye focused on "the main chance."

They and their village have recognized, met and accepted many an influence of modern times. Their possession and use (to the extent of use common in German villages, no more) of telephones, radios, electric lighting, new household plumbing, a town sewage disposal plant, mark these fortunately well-to-do Ammergauers as anything but hermits, cranks, long-facers, or old-fashioned ascetics. The latest theatrical devices and lighting effects add yet greater distinction to their Play. They know that, of course. For their Play they would go that far.

And no further. As to these commercialization allegations—here are some exhibits "right off the record" as a well-known American is fond of saying:

After perusing considerable literature upon the subject, I am able to present briefly certain incidents and figures regarding the money side of the Passion Play.

First, it should be noted that personal reward to the actors themselves only comes after three other shares of the income (if any) are allotted. Until the 1850 performance the players never received any recompense at all. Up until 1800 every



Alois Lang, who played the Christ in the 1930 Passion Play,  
will enact the part again in 1934.

Play ran into a deficit which had to be made up by the citizens, the Church and royal or friendly donations. In 1873, the Play having by then begun to receive some notoriety in Europe, the Council (in complete charge of the Play then, as now) turned down abruptly an offer from the World Exposition in Vienna to present it as a featured attraction. This would have meant a quick fame and considerable money—a “big advertising stunt,” Americans would have named it.

Five thousand dollars to each principal actor of the 1900 Play was offered by a producing company in New York, if they would appear in an American production the following spring. It was scarcely considered by them. Shortly afterward Anton Lang (Christus in 1900, 1910 and 1922) was personally solicited to come to New York at a big salary, all expenses for himself and family being paid, as well as an additional bonus to the village Council. To do what? To act the “lead” in Charles Rann Kennedy’s *The Servant in the House*. Momentarily Lang was intrigued. The Council gave him permission to do as he wished, but stated that if he accepted such an exploitation he could never appear again as Christus in Oberammergau. He turned down the offer at once. Anton Lang was repeatedly importuned in a score of ways over a period of thirty years to lend his fame to various schemes, but always refused. . . . Reports as to filming the Play are false; it probably never will be filmed. It was widely rumored that in 1922 (*during the depths of German depression*) a million dollars was refused for the film rights!

The 1910 season was fairly remunerative; but all that the highest paid (i.e., about ten) leading actors received for over a year’s work was about \$400 each, and the humbler participants got from \$7.50 up. . . . Although over a quarter of a million visitors attended in 1922, the production turned in \$2,500 net!—and that after they had postponed it from two

years before and had made sacrifices and efforts galore in order to put it on at all.

It has here to be noted that conditions were so terribly bad in Germany—particularly in Bavaria—during 1919 that the people of Oberammergau actually were “rescued from destitution” by the American Red Cross. So that, following the 1922 disaster, a group of the village artists (not as *actors*!) finally were prevailed upon to come to the United States and try to raise some funds. For what purpose?—well, chiefly to take care of the children of the town and of nearby Bavaria who had been orphaned or otherwise impoverished by the war. Fourteen of the artists, including the renowned Anton Lang, carvers, potters, sculptors, came in December, 1923, sponsored by a large committee of leading Americans; and five months later returned with about \$100,000 mostly as proceeds of the sale of their works. For themselves they took only expenses.

Worth quoting, in part, is a statement issued by “The Citizens of Oberammergau” when the Council had decided to try to put on that ill-fated production of 1922:

When we resolved to take up the Play again, we felt still bound by our vow and regarded it, as did our forefathers, as a holy duty. We are often reproached that the spirit of the vow is extinct, and that the Play is a mere matter of financial speculation. If that were so, we should surely not have taken the important step of resuming a matter which brings with it so much uncertainty and which might well prove to be our ruin. . . . We cling to our traditions with faithfulness. . . . May it contribute to reconcile every man to his God and to unite all Christian communities and conciliate all hostile nations.

And worth quoting, too, is Lang’s “Greeting to America” on the eve of his departure with the fourteen townsmen:

God’s greeting to all those who have stretched out helping hands across the seas to us of Oberammergau. . . . We have but one object in our visit—the most adventurous ever taken by people of our little mountain

village—and that is to secure *work*. This work is for our families, so that they may be saved to carry on the crafts of Oberammergau and again present the Passion Play.

A page or so back I spoke of the four parts into which the returns from the Play (if any) are divided. These are: for the Church upkeep and its charities; for the expenses of Play production (stage-hands, properties, costumes, lighting, etc.); for town expenses and for furnishing and upkeep of the homes which entertain visitors; for past indebtedness incurred for theater, etc. After which, on a sliding scale among four classes of actors and musicians, these divide the residue. (*Only once every decade is the Play given!*)

How cheering it must have been to them all that 1930 was a "bumper year"—300,000 attended! The audit at the end revealed a gross intake of \$1,750,000. That figure included receipts for board and rooms, sale of programs, photographs and books, as well as admissions. Nearly a half million dollars could be at once used to wipe out debts that had been hanging over them for years. Another quarter of a million went to defray the expenses of the Play—\$12,500 also had been spent for costumes. Finally, the entire cast divided around \$570,000. This last seems quite a sum—until you divide it by 750, approximately the number who participated!

Needless to say, no such Great Year is anticipated for the Jubilee Performance in 1934. Probably the town looks forward with some trepidation to results in a chaotic depression time. No private producer, no commercial organization would dare to present a huge, expensive theatrical production of the scope of the Passion Play in such a season. They would wait—before they speculated. Oberammergau does not *speculate*, it fulfills a duty!

Perhaps what has been set forth above about the tribulations of the town from 1914 to 1929 may have lent a slightly dis-



torted estimate as to conditions generally prevailing there. In general, the people are a fortunate lot. . . .

Before we leave in these pages the village and the villagers, it is surely worth while to point out how, in quite another way, the actual community itself is *not* comparable to hamlets elsewhere. I refer to its habit of ever-resurgent prosperity.

While it is true that a high percentage of its citizens are working-artists, actually Oberammergau is a farming Dorf; a German peasant village nearly half of whose citizens are dirt farmers. In Germany your tillers of the soil practically always live close together in small communities, and not in isolated homesteads dotted along rural roads as in the United States. Their acreages are spread upon the whole countryside roundabout, and to these unfenced plots, devoid of buildings, the owners go and come every day. In general, flocks and herds roam in communal tracts not good enough to serve for tillage, under the care of herdsmen. Obviously, Passion Play or no Passion Play, there is hard work to be done daily; Oberammergau peasant folk must earn their living through their profession. A small cash income every tenth year (if any!) as an actor, musician or super could mean little to them. Farming, then, and what their homes may take in "on the side," is their main concern. They do well as farmers.

An unusual prosperity also inheres in the very high-grade woodcarving done here by perhaps three hundred male citizens. They are especially skilled carvers. Their work has so excellent a reputation that they can sell what they turn out, even in off-years. And that is a fine thing for an artist!

As a matter of fact, the income of the whole village is, in normal times, relatively high. The years of the Play are not by any means the only years when visitors, German and foreign, come. The nine summers in-between are not usually lean years. Strangers drop in daily to see, to absorb, to buy in a small way mementoes of the town's dramatic glory and

to take away, in carving and paint and pottery and textile, the products of the so-fortunate artists. Moreover, every man's home is not only his castle, it is likewise an inn. The two thousand adult inhabitants somewhere, somehow offer nearly five thousand beds—I mean that that number is mustered at least in Play years. A modest nest-egg from that sideline—although, if one stops to think of it, the housekeeper gets but 18 marks for a “first-class” lodging; 16 for a second-class; and this is for two nights and five meals. There is, sadly enough, considerable costly wear-and-tear on the rooms.

This perquisite has not commercialized nor spoiled them; at least not outwardly, nor to the point where anything whatever is slighted or lacking in hospitality: be that to their everlasting credit. But it might be thought of as a sort of “un-earned increment” built up from centuries of their own hard-working investment in and faithfulness to the Play—that Play which has made the village famous only after they of the village had made the Play famous. When you reflect that the whole population today numbers much less than half a daily audience for a production, and has not increased greatly in fifty years, you will agree that it is not unreasonable that these self-sacrificing dramatists get some little earthly reward through what are honest sidelines (*entailing hard work!*) instead of their attaining wealth from enhancement of real estate values—as so often would and do Americans who exploit a similar publicity and population growth.

If this sideline emolument at first seems a bit grasping to you, reflect again, that in no other way save by throwing each home open as a lodging could the town take care of its tenth-year crowds. The Play begins at eight in the morning and ends at six at night. The whole audience, practically, must sleep in the town; and hotels enough or large enough to entertain such a host as 5,500 guests per night—and only every tenth year—would be both a hideous incongruity in the vil-

lage and an economic anomaly during the years between. Therefore, when a visitor buys a ticket, he must buy a room and food too. In the vast majority of cases he has the privilege of staying in an Oberammergau home, for the inns are few and small.

—And those rooms! That food! The straightforward democratic hospitality! Those family circles which you enter! Those well-worn, polished down, dull-sparkling, luxuriously simple homes—where on the other side of your partition may reside the family cows, pigs, ducks, hens!—I positively cannot enlarge upon the kind of “furnished rooms” these are! So limited is my space and so fearful by now am I that I have already said too admiringly much about these villagers. You may grow to doubt me—or, worse than that, you might have a tinge of disappointment when you yourself arrive, because it is not in reality a community of High Priests and Mother Superiors living just outside Eden’s gates, where everything of the past which was good is kept and everything of nowadays which is bad is kept out.

And so we will go forward to the Play.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Play 1930*

VERY early in the year in which a Play is to be presented, Oberammergau wears a decidedly changed appearance. Not that the place itself is much changed, but so many of the inhabitants are that one's attention is constantly upon them and he is under the illusion that everything is quite different.

No sooner do you reach either the railway station or the outskirts by motor-car than you see the first indications that this is a "Play Year." The porters who meet you at the station wear bright new uniform caps, but under them masses of unbarbered hair stream down, giving the faces a somewhat feminine appearance. But they are husky lads, keen-faced, smiling. They wear the leather shorts, midway-stockings and jauntily-tufted hats you have even before your arrival known to be Bavarian. Later you will undoubtedly recognize one or another of them on the stage as "citizens of Jerusalem," legionaries, or whatnot. Before you have left the railway vicinity you will be secretly much amused at seeing an obvious apostle driving a dray or hear a long-haired newsman call out his wares, interspersing German with a word or so of broken English. Many Oberammergauers, it appears, can command a little English on occasion. The villagers have again become Biblical figures. Hair and beards have for months been untouched by shears or razor, for a local decree forbids clean-shaven faces or bobbed hair. The whole town is again alive to its big task.

What a picture it is—a whole village, young and old, at play and at work together for a common end! Parents and

their children sharing in the fascinating tasks of rehearsals, ceremonies, productions.

Such interesting youngsters all roundabout! They take themselves so seriously! They begin an acting career as small angels or Jewish street children, eventually to graduate, in so far as they have the gifts, into more and more important rôles. They tell you there that as soon as a child learns to talk, most of his games with his comrades are make-believe Passion Plays. One supposes that by the time a bright young fellow or girl reaches twenty each could practically recite the whole text and songs word for word.

Only unmarried women may take a part in the cast. No facial make-up is permitted either male or female actors. Wigs are likewise tabu. The cast is selected by the village Council and its Play Committee balloting together; a momentous proceeding which takes place always in October before the Play is to be given. This and many other of the Regulations governing the Play—a sort of a Constitution and By-Laws, as it were—are written down in pen and ink in an old book handed down for generations. Rehearsals are under way six months before the opening date.

So familiar has everyone in town become with not only the words of the Play but its directing and stage “business,” that whipping into shape the exceedingly long and complicated drama is not as difficult as at first thought it would appear to be. Furthermore, it must be remembered that every winter one of the chief occupations and recreations of the citizens is putting on theatricals of all sorts in the Town Hall and the small rehearsal-theater. There is always something or other going on in which the cleverer actors are at work. (How they enjoy it!) Therefore choosing the cast is not a gamble for the Council, it is a sort of a rewarding and umpiring to be done among their own neighbors and friends.

There seems to be some sort of a vested interest; no, not that exactly, rather a hereditary, traditional privilege which

inheres in the main rôles; many of which remain in families for many years. The Official Record of Actors in past Plays shows how often a few surnames crop up in the cast—and also how the same actors are shifted about from rôle to rôle as they grow older. There are said to be three hundred Langs in Oberammergau today, and such folknames as Mayr, Lechner, Zwink and Rutz are so common as to suggest the village's isolated and stable character. Newcomers are not, in fact, overencouraged to settle there.

To costume some seven hundred performers is something of an undertaking in itself; but, as a local industry, it would seem to have attained to great perfection. "The fact of all the costumes being *made* in the village, must not mislead anyone to imagine them as being mere makeshifts," says Mrs. Swift in her book about the Play. "The most beautiful of materials are imported from Paris, Berlin, and even Damascus—brocades, velvets, embroideries and cloth-of-gold. Most of them have to be renewed for each Play. All had to be made new—one thousand of them—for the Play of 1922, the old ones having been used during the war for bandages and needed articles of clothing. . . . It took a year . . ."

Farther on she estimates that to repaint the scenery alone would be fully a year's work. Then, of course, there is the decennial repainting and redecorating of the Theater; besides which the whole village feels it incumbent upon itself to look its freshest. Every home receives renovating. "Of a necessity, much attention must be given to material details in a village of less than 2500 inhabitants, which is preparing to care for about twenty thousand visitors a week, for sixteen weeks in succession." Yes, indeed, considering these things: all the effort, time and planning needed to get the Play even so far as the first performance; a stranger like myself often wonders whether or not these leisurely people do not in a way come to dread the Tenth Year. To dread all the work and

turmoil that the place must go through for the better part of a twelvemonth.

The last Passion Play was presented in a theater in many ways completely remodeled since 1922. The permanent stage settings, so familiar from pictures and from memory to millions the world round, had to be replaced, and were almost duplicated as to arrangement and scheme, but in detail were redone in a little more tasteful and *à la moderne* manner. As a glance at the photograph will make plain, the stage has a wide, deep proscenium large enough for perhaps seven hundred people at once. Back of it at left and right are conventionalized house or palace fronts before which many episodes of the plot take place. In the rear-center stands the isolated classic-looking central stage-set inside of which are given many scenes of the Play and tableaux of the Old Testament narrative. The stage-lighting and mechanisms were brought up-to-date, and the seating arrangement of the auditorium quite expanded. All the seats are situated within a huge arched-over, railway-shed type of structure whose framework (dating from 1900) is of steel girders. It is not imposing inside, and from the outside has only its size to recommend it. Yet it does the job; it can shelter 5,500 paid admissions and allow all to see what goes on all over the stage. Yet the stage itself is so huge that it is most difficult to see clearly the features of the actors without binoculars. This fact is not a fault, really, but a necessary requirement of the situation; and the staging and directing is aimed to fit such a requirement: totalities, mass effects, striking pictures being striven for, and not individual or small group intimacies. Above and behind the whole stage plainly show the naked rugged Bavarian Alps, the most fitting and inspiring back-drop of any stage in the world. This splendid feature has been truly a part of the Play since its beginning. Nature, outdoors, the mountains, were until last performance admitted in another way: *the entire stage was unroofed*, so that rain or sun could pour upon it as God willed. In 1930 an

ingenious roofage of glass was thrown over the proscenium, so that from then on in subsequent years the players will have shelter—a somewhat effete concession, perhaps, yet comforting at least to the audience who always became upset and distracted by the fact that the actors they were watching were being drenched or snowed upon or (in May) chilled by the mountain winds.

You must reach your allotted seat in the auditorium before 8 A.M. if you would see the performance start. What you will see before six that night you will not readily forget. What with the singing of the chorus, the incidental and accompaniment music from a full orchestra, the amazing beauty of costuming and stage-picturing, the size and excellence of the cast, your eight hours of seat-sitting will fly by as in a dream. . . .

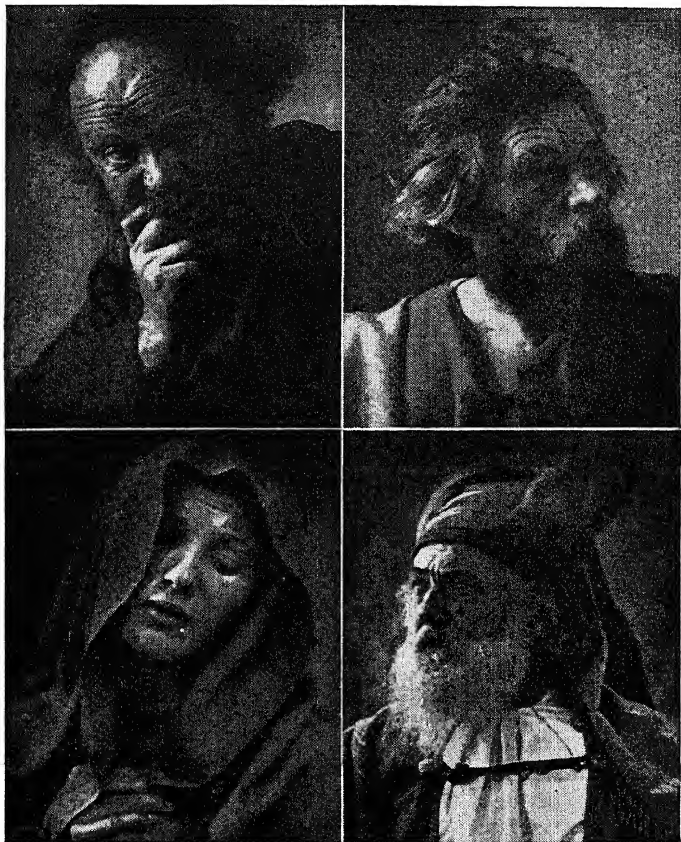
Here is the List of Characters—the chief rôles only—which presented the 1930 Passion Play for my own vast enjoyment:

Prologue . . . . .	Anton Lang
Christus . . . . .	Alois Lang
Mary . . . . .	Anni Rutz
Peter . . . . .	Peter Rendl
John . . . . .	Hans Lang
Judas . . . . .	Guido Mayr
Simon of Bethany . . . .	Andreas Lang
Caiaphas . . . . .	Hugo Rutz
Magdalene . . . . .	Hansi Preisinger
High Priest Annas . . . .	Anton Lechner
Pilate . . . . .	Melchior Breitsamter
Herod . . . . .	Hans Mayr

(The Director was Georg Johann Lang—who also directed in 1910.)

Quite a Lang affair, we thought. But we drew no further conclusions from that. The Prologue introduces tableaux and the chorus and he explains the moral of the former and tries to show how its significance relates to the act of the Play which





The actors in the Oberammergau Passion Play give vivid and unforgettable impersonations. In the upper left is Judas and next to him Petrus. In the two lower pictures are the Virgin Mary and Annas.

immediately follows. The part of the leader of the chorus, the Choragus, is an important one, because to him falls the solo singing by which other comments or explanations are given, and he, furthermore, must possess both a speaking and a singing voice distinguished enough to be superior to the fifty other members of the choir—no mean distinction, by the way. For Germany is the very home of choral song.

Alois Lang was magnificent as an impersonation of Christ. Tall, vigorous, he gave out a militant Jesus, a presentation, it is said, not nearly so beautifully spiritual as that of Anton Lang, whom modern times know best because he was in the rôle three times. Yet equally effective and unforgettable he must have been—or so it seemed to me who had not seen Anton. The tradition persists that the best acting, as pure *acting*, has usually fallen to the part of Judas, and certainly the Judas of Guido Mayr was uncanny. Other parts, save that of Mary, I cannot recall so well. Mary's was a simple and sweetly unaffected rôle; her face and ways could scarcely have been improved upon. She had been preferred by the electors to the daughter of Anton Lang, something which was said to be a great disappointment to Herr Lang. Alois Lang is a beekeeper and carver; Mayr also a carver; Anton Lang a potter; little Anni, an office bookkeeper.—Each to his trade; each to his and her higher trade, the stage!

Few who have not witnessed the Passion Play have the slightest notion of its plot—whether indeed, it has any—or the nature of that eight-hour performance. I think I can give the best idea of it, and certainly the briefest, by setting down the bare skeleton of its outline, which, without comment, will fully tell its own story. Its own story, I mean, of the progression of the action and, one might say, "what it is all about." But as for the well-nigh unbelievable perfection of its stagecraft and costumes; as for the superb impressiveness of its stage-pictures, or groupings, managed so as to appear taken from famous masterpieces by Murillo, Rubens, Raphael and others,

whose art is so closely followed that it seems as if the renowned paintings had come to life;—these attractions and attributes of the Play can be yours only through your own eyes.

### MORNING DIVISION OF THE PRODUCTION

1st Representation (i.e., Choruses and Tableau. The Representations are *outside* the plot proper)

- a. Expulsion of Adam and Eve
- b. The Adoration

ACT ONE—The Entry Into Jerusalem

First Scene: Christ and the Apostles followed by a crowd enter

Second Scene: Christ Drives the Money Changers from the Temple

Third Scene: Priests and the People

Fourth Scene: Temple traders and their grievances

2nd Representation

- a. Plotting of the high priests (by Chorus)
- b. Joseph and his brethren

ACT TWO—The Council of High Priests decide to take Christ captive (4 Scenes)

3rd Representation

- a. Prologue tells of Christ's parting from His mother
- b. Tobias takes leave of his home (Tobit iv)
- c. "The beloved bride bewails the loss of her bridegroom" (Song of Solomon v)

ACT THREE—Christ and Twelve Apostles in Bethany. Leaving His mother. Episode of Mary Magdalene (5 Scenes)

4th Representation

- a. Prologue and Chorus
- b. King Ahasuerus casts Vashti from him and exalts Esther (Esther i)

ACT FOUR—Christ goes with His Disciples toward Jerusalem, and sends before Him two Disciples to make ready the Paschal Lamb . . . Judas conceives the idea of betraying his Master (7 Scenes)

5th Representation

- a. Prologue: The Last Supper
- b. The Lord gives manna unto the people (Exodus xvi:31)
- c. The bunch of grapes from Canaan (Numbers xiii:23)

ACT FIVE—Christ and Disciples partake of the last Passover (Last Supper) (2 Scenes)

6th Representation

- a. Prologue: The Betrayer
- b. The selling of Joseph for twenty silver pieces

ACT SIX—Judas comes, before the Sanhedrin and promises the betrayal. The Sanhedrin determine on the death of Jesus (4 Scenes)

7th Representation

- a. Prologue: Christ on the Mount of Olives
- b. Joab kills Amasa (II Samuel xx:9, 10)

ACT SEVEN—Christ betrayed

First Scene: Judas leading the soldiers to Olivet

Second Scene: Approach of Christ and Disciples

Third Scene: An angel appears to tell Christ

Fourth Scene: The Judas Kiss

*Intermission of an hour and a half*

## AFTERNOON DIVISION OF THE PRODUCTION

8th Representation

- a. Prologue: Jesus before Annas, the High Priest
- b. Michaiah before King Ahab (I Kings xxii:15)

ACT EIGHT—Christ led before the High Priests, is condemned, and is taken through the mob to prison (5 Scenes)

9th Representation

- a. Prologue: Jesus before Caiaphas
- b. Naboth is condemned by false witnesses (I Kings xxi:8, 13)
- c. Job is affronted by his wife and relatives

ACT NINE—Christ taken before High Priest Caiaphas is condemned to death. Peter denies Him (6 or 7 Scenes)

10th Representation

- a. Prologue: The despair of Judas
- b. Cain, a fugitive on the face of the earth

ACT TEN—

- First Scene: Judas alone, remorseful.
- Second Scene: The High Council convenes
- Third Scene: Judas appears before the Council
- Fourth Scene: Council orders Christ brought
- Fifth Scene: Christ Before the Council
- Sixth Scene: Three Ambassadors of Council before Pilate's house
- Seventh Scene: Suicide of Judas, alone

11th Representation

- a. Prologue: Christ Before Pilate
- b. Daniel before King Darius (Daniel vi:16)

ACT ELEVEN—Christ taken before Pilate (6 Scenes)

12th Representation

- a. Prologue: Christ before Herod
- b. Samson rends the temple asunder (Judges xvi: 29, 300)

ACT TWELVE—Christ and the Priests before Herod (4 Scenes)

13th Representation

- a. Prologue: The Scourging and Crown of Thorns
- b. Joseph's coat (Genesis xxxvii:31)

ACT THIRTEEN—Christ again before Pilate (4 Scenes)

14th Representation

- a. Prologue: Jesus condemned
- b. Joseph made ruler of Egypt (Genesis xli:41)
- c. Symbol of the two kids (Lev. xvi:7)
- d. The Crowd's voices behind the curtain

ACT FOURTEEN—Pilate brings Jesus before the crowd who demand His death. He is sentenced (2 Scenes)

15th Representation

- a. Abraham ascends to his son's sacrifice (Genesis xxii:3)
- b. Moses raises a symbol of the Crucifixion (Numbers xxi:8)

ACT FIFTEEN—Jesus on the way to Golgotha (4 Scenes)

16th Representation

- a. Prologue: Jesus upon Golgotha
- b. Chorus sings, as sounds of hammering are heard off-stage

ACT SIXTEEN—Jesus crucified, dies and is buried (4 Scenes)

17th Representation

- a. Prologue: The Resurrection
- b. Jonah cast upon land
- c. People of Israel cross the Red Sea

ACT SEVENTEEN—Resurrection. Appearance to Magdalene (4 Scenes)

Hallelujah Chorus and Closing Tableau.

END

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Play 1934*

I BELIEVE I am correct in saying that in all the life of the Passion Play there has been no occasion when two revivals of it came so close together as will the 1930 and the 1934 Jubilee performances. This fact makes possible, for the first time, the practical duplication of the cast for two successive performances. Perhaps for the first time, too (but of this I am not certain either), the rôle of the Virgin Mary will be twice taken by the same girl. This rôle could scarcely be more capably filled, judging from its success in 1930.

So far as it has been transmitted to America since the October, 1933, elections, the principal rôles will be filled mainly as they were last time. Johanna Preisinger, sensational as the Magdalene of 1930, having since married, will not do that part again. It will fall to Klara Mayr, her understudy in 1930. The parts of John the Disciple and Judas will go to others; Willy Bierling taking the first and Hans Zwink the second. The same Director will direct. Picturesque Hans Mayr will forget for a space his worldly duties as head of the town, and as Herod will decree the Slaughter of the Innocent Christ. From his sawmill will come Melchior Breitsamter to sit in judgment as Pilate, perchance brushing from his working clothes the scented dust of pine trees to wash his Roman hands in the water which can never make them clean. The same Laborers will neglect their shovels, Farmers their fields, Cooks their kitchens, Children their books—to the glory of God!

1934 will see an innovation, however. A short play, serving

both as a sort of *Apologia* (as if anything of that sort were needed!) and as a Prologue. In the latter capacity it appears to be peculiarly apt; but in the former it is not a little puzzling. The Passion Play proper, it is reported, will be somewhat shortened and condensed in order that this new feature can be given. It is said to be of uncommon interest, this Prologue play, and to add rather than detract from the main feature. Here are the facts about it as already sent to us in the United States:

Leo Weismantel writes this play. Its title is *The Pest and Passion Vow of the Year 1634*, subtitled, "A Play of an Everlasting Happening in the Transitoriness of Time." Herr Weismantel is a dramatist of standing in Germany, and has done extremely well with his offering.

The piece is in two parts. The first part "about a seventh of the whole, is a divine service. The Intercessor recites a prayer in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Then the townsfolk (of 1633) headed by the oldest inhabitant, appear on the stage and repeat the vow of the Passion Play in a beautiful liturgical antiphonal prayer. . . .

"This service, of high dramatic character, which is held in front of the curtain, introduces the play proper, which has a preamble and five acts. The stage settings present the village of 1633, at the right the old inn, in the middle background the Council's room, and at the left the home of Kaspar Schisler, the man who brought the pest to Oberammergau and gave occasion for the vow."—The rest of the play tells the story and legends which go to make up the despair of the village, and its final salvation through the vow.

This play has been presented at the big theater all through the latter half of the 1933 summer, the attendance being mainly German, and it has proven of high attraction, capacity houses having turned up at each of its later performances. The Director of the Passion Play has staged and handled it. This is what he is reported as saying about it:



"My main object was," says Herr Lang, "to have the people of Oberammergau go well prepared into the great event of their Passion Play of 1934. Their vow was to be born in them anew, and what subject could be more powerful than the Play Year scenes of 1633? That was the great event out of which the new experience of the vow should grow."

A condensed version of the Weismantel play has been transmitted to the author who reproduces it here:

The preamble shows Schisler on the way home to Oberammergau from the nearby Eschenlohe where he is employed as a day-laborer. Tired, and plagued by "a wild headache," he sits down and sleeps. His secret thoughts are shown. His sins (personified on the stage) urge him not to return to Oberammergau; but longing to see his wife and children encourages him. Death appears to him. Thus he knows in his dream that he has the plague; but is shown as not knowing it when he awakens. He rushes down into the Ammer Valley.

Act I shows the consecration of the church, followed by revelry, dancing and general merriment. The Council of Twelve convenes; and one of the members, a father of 16 children, is incidentally chosen as village grave-digger.

In the Second Act Kaspar Schisler arrives home. His wife shrinks from him in horror. One hears a drunken man outside crying: "The pest! The pest!"

Act III exhibits the ravages of the pest in the village. The people are dying like flies. They want to kill Schisler because he brought the dreadful disease. The grave-digger can hardly keep pace with his work. A funeral procession passes. An aged woman runs after the grave-digger, bringing the shroud for her grandchild. One after another, the grave-digger's children die; he almost goes mad. The priest heading the procession is attacked by the pestilence. He staggers: the monstrosity falls to the ground.

In Act IV, Schisler is shown in a chair as if recovering from his illness. His son Vitus sits beside him. He directs his father's attention to a cross on the wall which he himself has carved and intends to carry into the plague-stricken village to set up there, in the belief that all who see it will be healed. . . . Kaspar says to his son:

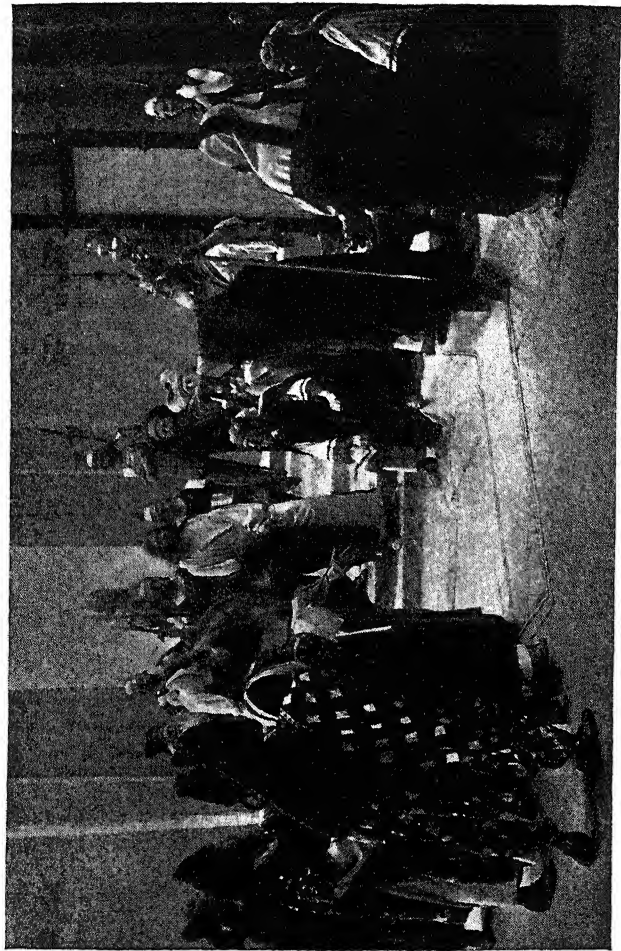
"That has all been done before, Vitus, and has done nothing for us. But, listen, if you hang up a cross in the middle of the village, and, if, while the people are gazing up to it, the wooden Saviour cries out: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' [the words the Bible reports that Christ uttered as he gave up the ghost], why, then deliverance will come! . . . Vitus, your cross is silent. What must be sought is such a miraculous cross."

The father drops off to sleep. Vitus believes him dying. But then Vitus hears him pronouncing these words spoken by Jesus on the cross; for his father has had a vision in a dream. He now awakens, and, dying, says to Vitus:

"As truly as I live, the Lord will have it so: you go to the Council of the Six and the Twelve, and say that if I, Kaspar Schisler, die, and if they will have mercy and forgiveness for me; will bring a holy sacrifice to my grave; and will set up a cross *which is living*; I shall be the last to die here of the pest."

In Act V Vitus runs out into the street and tells of his father's prophecy. The people have faith in it. They seek "a living sacrifice." They can be withheld only with difficulty from burning Vitus as the victim. . . . But the Council summons Vitus and listens gravely to his report. The people flock to the cemetery, Vitus' cross is there set up, and the "sacrifice" at Kaspar's burial takes the form of worshipping at this cross and solemnly pledging the vow for an eternal repetition of the Lord's Passion: a play in which "a living cross is set up"!

As was said once earlier in these pages, the great Play is always being changed; its text is forever being modified. Likewise the music and the way the scenes are put together. Perhaps that is one secret of its perennial youth. So, it should not offend any prospective visitor to the Jubilee performance to learn that such an important innovation has been planned. A brand-new "introduction" to a Play which one might think needed no such thing as an introduction after all these years and all this fame; well, that is part of the movement, the surge, the feel of the times. It is good that the Play is yet after all somewhat molten and moldable. It is alive, in spirit,



The Passion Play is presented with an extraordinary perfection of costumes and stagecraft.  
This is the scene in which Christ stands before King Herod.

after all these years, and lives not upon all the fame it has gained in the past. . . .

To the outsider, coming fresh to Oberammergau and the Play, I dare to forecast that both will appear unaffected by the revolution which Germany and its people and its institutions have undergone so recently. I prophesy that this village will have been influenced least of all spots in the Fatherland by the things and the ideas of new politics and new sociology.

It would be a tragic thing if it had been. For the village and Play of 1930 was world-famous. Even more so that in 1850. It has been dedicated to Time and not to the tides in the affairs of men.

*World-famous!* . . . Probably in these days of keen advertising and keenly exploited publicity, there are few noted "tourist attractions" which have not been over-press-agented. Often too much has been said and written; too much incredible enthusiasm has been spread broadcast. Many glittering reputations have because of it become suspect. Sophisticated travelers have grown skeptical about landmarks and world-marks they have yet to see. Too often have loud alarums of the "wolf! wolf!" variety been shouted into their ears. Too often, alas, has this skepticism replaced a certain naïveté and freshness of approach which many of the world's sights and events seem to need; so that this skepticism has helped to emphasize the disappointment these seasoned travelers may have felt in the presence of their quests. For a tinge of unexpected, surprised revelation in the beholder adds to the impressiveness of the great shrines of travel. . . . Do some feel that Oberammergau is over-press-agented? I have wondered.

But—and modestly I say it—the present writer, who has been privileged to view possibly an actual numerical majority of tourist objectives all over the whirling globe, can report and testify that the Passion Play *will not disappoint*. I'll modify that statement a trifle:—it certainly *ought not to disappoint* even

the most toured, the most jaded, most sophisticated of mortals who seek it for *what it is*. Like the Taj Mahal, jewel of India, supreme in its sphere of wonder and beauty, the Oberammergau Play is the perfect thing in its own realm. Let me assure the toughest skeptic that here at least "the burden of proof" as to its not satisfying every anticipation rests upon himself. If the Play disappoints—so much the worse for the complainant. The blame will not be upon the Play; the fault will lie in his own background. As for those who more earnestly keep the faith which Jesus founded let me say this: they cannot seek a shrine of faith elsewhere from which they would return as deeply impressed with the conviction that here, at least, *flickers the undying Light Of The World*.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Bavaria, Land of the Play*

IF ADVANCE notices received over here are correct, there will be given in 1934 twenty-eight performances of the Passion Play. The "run" will open May 27 and close with the performance of September 16. Here is the full schedule, which like other theatrical—and human—affairs is subject to changes.

May 21, 27, 30

June 3, 6, 11, 17, 20, 25

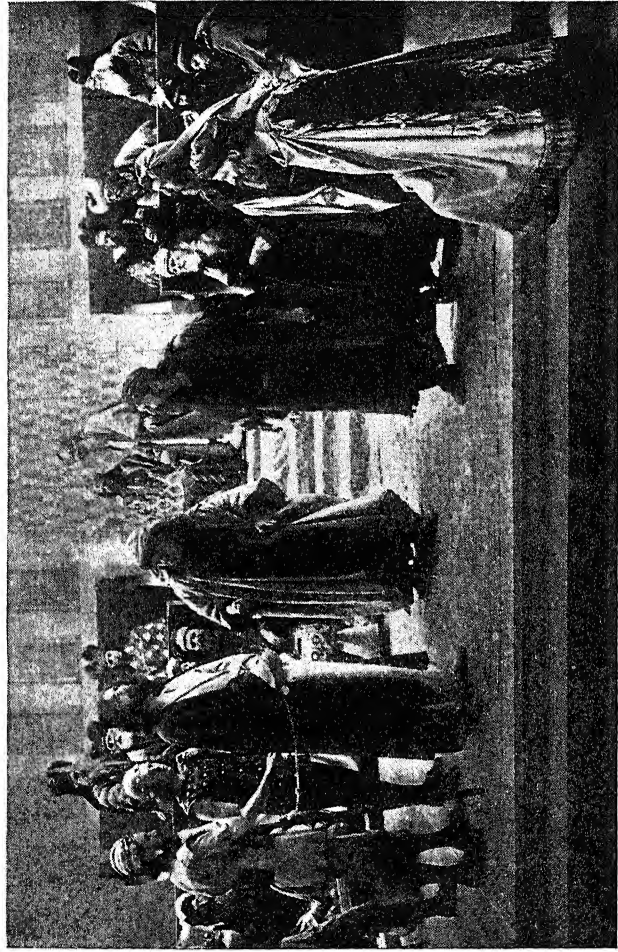
July 1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25, 29

August 1, 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 22, 26, 29

September 3, 5, 10, 12, 16, 23

(These, you will note, are all Sundays, Mondays or Wednesdays)

I give these dates because with them before you the process of arranging a European itinerary can be undertaken early. If one is to go abroad in 1934, certainly the intelligent thing to do is to chart the tour with one point of the compass on a Passion Play date. It has been the experience of former Play years that the board and room reservations made early at Oberammergau were the ones which could be set on *the exact date selected*. Whereas—according to what I have learned from friends and acquaintances—if making these reservations is allowed to wait too long, sometimes they simply cannot be got for the day planned. As mentioned before, a foreigner is privileged to buy play-ticket, room and meals in one coupon for a lump sum; as, of course, planning lodging for over five



Tall and vigorous, Alois Lang gives a militant impersonation of Jesus. He is seen here standing before the Synhedrion, or High Council of the Jews.

thousand visitors a day in a country village of half that number of citizens cannot be a haphazard or casual procedure.

My personal advice, then, is that, having chosen the 1934 Play date, you plot the remainder of your days in Germany and Europe to fit it. Hardly is it necessary to tell those of my readers who will have spent hours and days reading-up on "what to see abroad" and "how to do Europe on a dollar a day," etc., that the Germany of Bavaria is to a great majority of travelers the romantic Germany, the cream of the German milk.—No, not the cream on the Munich beer; rich (in appearance) as that is, it is after all only froth. Yes, I, too, agree that Bavaria with its Munich, Nuremberg, Rothenburg, Dinkelsbühl, Nördlingen, Würzburg, Bamberg, Ratisbon, Augsburg; its Algäu, its Bavarian Alps, its—wait a moment! I am giving these from memory, and I must go more slowly.

Around Oberammergau—which because of the crowded state of things on Play days is not too fitting a spot to tarry more than two days in—lies a most fascinating neighborhood. You will wish, of course, to visit the monastery and Church of Ettal in order to round out your Oberammergau experience. Hardly farther away, as any guidebook will describe to you, are those three or four striking castles built by the eccentric King Ludwig II of Bavaria. And a bit farther out still from the Ammer Valley one reaches Garmisch-Partenkirchen; twin towns lying at the foot of Germany's highest mountain (wonderful cog road, from here!), the Zugspitze. From this summit on a clear day one has an imposing view into three nations and over hundreds of mountaintops.

I have been guilty of stating in some of my former writings that if I (myself, personally, mind you!) had to choose but one sight, one experience in all Europe to see, that theoretical choice would have to fall upon the Deutsches Museum at Munich. Now, that choice is undoubtedly due to a scientific turn of mind which I cannot overcome; and I am willing to grant



that, without a yearn toward or a background of some little thickness in science, physics and mechanics; others might not thank me for steering them toward that museum to spend days and days there. I merely state that the place is unique; it is incredibly huge; it is inexhaustible—and let it go at that.

About Munich itself, inevitable gateway to Oberammergau, I need hardly exclaim here. Munich beer, Munich restaurants, Munich jollity, Munich music are characteristics which have set standards for the Western world. Munich art collections are classic to all lovers of painting and sculpture, and alone worth visiting—and a year or so later visiting again.

If you, hurried American, really wish to have a graspable living-picture of the Middle Ages put before you, you can visit it in three sizes: Dinkelsbühl, the village; Nördlingen and Rothenburg, the towns; Nuremberg, the metropolis. These four places have so fully retained the medieval quality (especially the first three mentioned) that a sensitive visitor gets it in deep thrills of complete satisfaction. Visit Regensburg (Ratisbon), curiously an overlooked and untouristed city on the Danube, rich in history and particularly blessed with some old religious architecture.

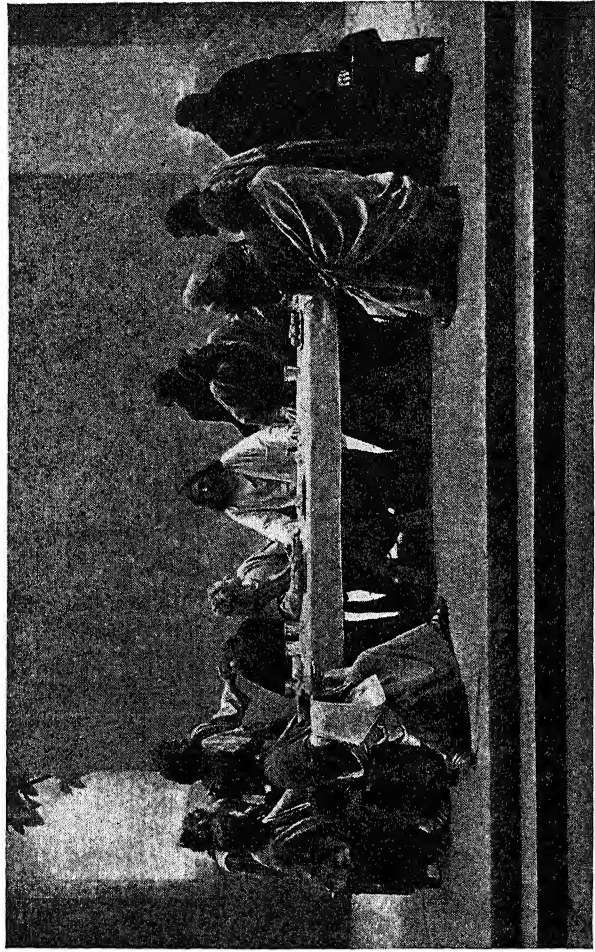
Flying seems of late to be one of the easiest things Germans do. You who visit Germany will probably be as surprised as I was at the off-handedness with which airplaning is being done in Europe and particularly in Germany. . . . But wait, about now you will be asking me, Where and how will I get together all the money necessary to pay for a European trip in 1934? Look at foreign exchange rates, you gasp. Look at domestic depression. . . . You have me here, friends! We *have been* in a fierce and tragic depression. Money is money. You will have to pardon my naïve enthusiasms cropping out all through this book, for I have unconsciously been writing it in spirit for those who like myself, depression or not, sneak off to Europe every chance—and dollar—they can get.

Maybe you can't—or have imagined you couldn't—go to Europe or Oberammergau in 1934, on account of money shortage. But if you can't or don't go, *you may never see the Passion Play*. If you wait six more years, you may never go, and if you do, you'll be older by that much, and that much, at my age anyway, is something to think about. You can never go abroad any younger than now—and let a hardened globe-trotter warn you, the earlier in his life one travels the more that experience counts in his life.—No more advice. But I do want to mention one more thing, and emphasize it. A substantial discount on regular dollar exchange rates is in effect\* (and will be in 1934) for foreigners who buy marks which are to be spent in Germany. In other words, 15 per cent\* or more is to be added to the sum *in marks* which you would ordinarily obtain in exchanging American money—if those marks are to be spent inside the Fatherland.

Another news item! . . . German travel authorities in America recently showed me statistics which seem to prove that the American paper dollar spent on a tour to Germany in 1934 (New York to New York) will buy—partly due to these “registered marks” and partly to the very great cuts made in transportation rates—just about what that important paper dollar *would have bought in 1926*. I add this statistic because it surprised me and it may surprise you. It further appears that during the period of the Play individual travelers are offered a full third off regular railway fares, and groups using special trains get the benefit of a *60% discount*. These advantages will apply on Rhine steamers as well as on trains. . . . Board and lodging costs in Oberammergau and admission to the Play have likewise been drastically cut. . . .

And so, good-bye,—until, by chance, we meet in front of the huge theater in Oberammergau around eight o'clock some morning next June!

\* These rates probably will fluctuate during the year.



The groupings of some of the scenes are based on famous Renaissance paintings, which have been followed so closely that at times they seem to have come to life. The Last Supper has the dignity and power of the great painting by Leonardo da Vinci.

## CHAPTER SIX

### *Further Reading on the Passion Play*

- The Passion Play of Oberammergau.* Janet H. Swift (Revell)  
"Painting the Oberammergau Players in Their Homes." Carl Link (*Ladies' Home Journal*, September, 1922)  
"Christ in Oberammergau." Ferdinand Reyher (*Atlantic Monthly*, November, 1922)  
"Music of The Passion Play." H. L. Gideon (*Forum*, December, 1910)  
*The Passion Play of Oberammergau.* Montrose J. Moses (Duffield)  
*Legendary Germany, Oberammergau and Bayreuth.* Regina Jais (Lincoln MacVeagh)  
*Historical and Bibliographical Survey of the German Religious Drama.* M. J. Rudwin (University of Pittsburgh, 1924)  
*Oberammergau.* Mrs. L. Parks-Richards (1910)

Reference to the *Reader's Guide*, covering the years of the Play performances and the year following, will reveal many articles on the subject printed in American periodicals.







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